

When Is It Time to Change?

by Alan "Shlomo" Veingrad

When you are constantly feeling that your current path no longer makes sense, it is time to change. I know that today I don't look much like I used to – as an offensive lineman for the Green Bay Packers and later for the Dallas Cowboys. Today, I sport a long flowing beard, yarmulke and *tzitzis*. But I did not roll out of the NFL and into the synagogue – that change came later. Just as dramatic for me was the change I experienced when I retired from the game.

I once had a fellow player teach me all about how to focus. He asked what I focused on when I was in my stance as an offensive lineman, and taught me that it must be on one thing: THE TARGET.

As a child, I wondered what a pro football player would look like up close. Growing up in Miami, I landed a coveted job with the Miami Dolphins: operating the net that is raised behind the goalposts during an attempted field goal or extra point. I wore an orange staff shirt which allowed me to get into the locker room after the game and to see what these guys were made of.

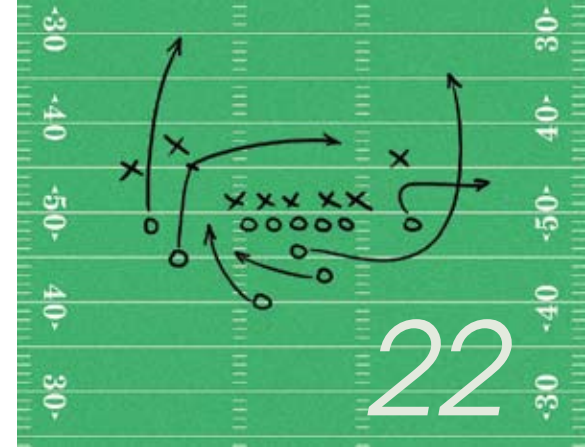
This experience really sparked my early appreciation for the value of *awareness*. I discovered how much I could learn by getting close to people and just paying attention to everything that was going on. I learned to listen to what others said about me and what they thought I could do. I needed this awareness to manage the two dramatic transitions in my life:

the transition from pro football to non-player and the transition from a more casual Jew to a more focused one.

In the second case, my awareness was piqued when I was invited to a rabbi's home for a meal. While I was there, a neighbor, also a rabbi, stopped by to borrow a barbecue grill. My host jumped to his feet and offered to take the grill over to his neighbor's house and I followed.

I watched his neighbor's son and his friends enjoying a simple relay race game in the street and I was struck by how much they were enjoying the few hot dogs from the grill that highlighted the boy's birthday party. It caused me to think about all the material "stuff" I had accumulated in my life and how I really desired to be more like these families: relaxed, focused and confident, living simply with everyday joy. I had fallen into the "where are you going to spend the summer?" syndrome and wanted to make a profound change – to return to my spiritual roots. One thing I knew is that it would take focus.

I once had a fellow player teach me all about how to focus. He asked what I focused on when I was in my stance as an offensive lineman, and taught



me that it must be on one thing: THE TARGET. So I started to stare at a single point on my opponent's chest. This proved to be exactly what I needed in pursuing my Torah studies, from which I learned even more about focusing my mind and actions. In addition to focus, you need to keep moving. I once played against Lawrence Taylor of the New York Giants, a fearsome player that I dreaded facing. It turned out to be a great game for me, and it was a big thrill the next day when I ended up getting a game ball for my efforts. But then the coach asked me, "OK, but what are you going to do TODAY?" That is the question we all have to ask ourselves each day if we are to continue to re-stoke our desire to be great at what we do.

You can do this! You can create changes large and small in your life if you ramp up your awareness, focus your desire and follow your passion, if you use your discipline and your wisdom and your transferable talents, if you create around you a team that will help pull you out of the old ways and into the new. You may not end up looking like you used to, and that's okay. You will be going on the journey of a lifetime.

About the author: Alan "Shlomo" Veingrad

Alan Shlomo had a seven-year career as an offensive lineman in the NFL, first with the Green Bay Packers and then the Dallas Cowboys, with whom he won Super Bowl XXVII. Shlomo is a sought after speaker, captivating businesses, universities and religious audiences around the world, bringing his inspirational messages of positivism, personal excellence, leadership, team play, and spiritual connection. Shlomo is also the National Marketing Director with CJA and Associates - specialists in the design and marketing of innovative financial planning concepts and employee benefit plans for the small business and estate planning markets. For more information, please visit www.ShlomoVeingrad.com. For Media Inquiries and bookings, please contact Robin Moskow of Moskow Management: robinmoskow@comcast.net or (610) 804-6701.

Copyright ©2010, Alan Veingrad